DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 288 227 CS 505 807

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TITLE Communication across the Curriculum.
PUB DATE Nov 87
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (73rd, Boston, MA, November 5-8, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Business Communication; Business Skills; Communication Research; Communication Skills; *Education Work Relationship; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Interdisciplinary Approach; Interpersonal Relationship; Oral Language; Skill Development; *Speech Communication; Speech Curriculum; *Speech Instruction; *Speech Skills
IDENTIFIERS Communication across the Curriculum

ABSTRACT

The importance of the development of oral communication abilities has been documented in a number of sources. Studies of graduates, employers, and corporate executives have revealed, for example, that skills in problem solving, communication, and interpersonal relations are most valued in high tech corporations. Several recent indictments of education have also echoed the need for highly developed oral communication abilities. One way of assisting students in developing oral communication competencies is the required speech communication course, and another way is to integrate communication skills into content area courses. A review of the literature suggests that courses in English literature, composition, business communication, vocational education, engineering, psychology, and teacher education at various institutions have effectively incorporated instruction in oral communication competencies. Other schools have established speaking labs, while emphasis on speaking skills received attention in different disciplines seemed to depend on the interests of individual instructors. Several school districts have defined integrated curricula including speech, and a handful of colleges also have integrated speech programs. It can be determined from these programs that integrating communication across the curriculum depends largely on the expertise of instructors, although few are specifically trained to teach speaking skills. Success of these programs also depends on student interest, a careful balance of skills integrated into the curriculum, and attention to developmental sequence. (Fifty-five references are appended.) (SKC)

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COMMUNICATION ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

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The importance of the development of oral communication abilities has been documented in a number of sources. Studies of graduates, employers, and corporate executives have emphasized the relationship between professional success and sophisticated communication abilities. For example, Hague (1986) when reporting interviews with thirty vice-presidents and division directors concluded that skills in problem solving, communication and interpersonal relations were most valued in high tech corporations. Similarly, Hetherington (1982) from a survey of alumni of her institution and area employers noted that,

> Out of the 80 possible answers on the alumni survey and the 65 on the questionnnaire sent to employers, only four or five dealt with oral communication. That the highest percentages of agreement among all the answers should fall on these few was quite unexpected; the surprise emphasized for me the neglect of conscious training in the spoken language that is common today. (p. 570)

Several of the recent inditements of education have also echoed the need for highly developed oral communication abilities. For example, the Association of American Colleges in INTEGRITY IN THE COLLEGE CURRICULUM (1985) stated,

> We are a century or more away from the time when going to college meant instruction in oratory, stage presence, debate, and the arts of oral persuasion...A bachelors degree should mean that its holders can read, write and speak at levels of distinction and have been given many opportunities to learn how. It also should mean that many do so with style. (p.19)

Obviously, one way of assisting students in developing oral communication competencies is the required speech communication course. Boileau and McBath (1987) contended that the independent course taught by a qualified instructor was the best means of developing oral communication competencies. Such a course, however, is not routinely required at the elementary, secondary or college levels. Winkeljohann (1978) reported that 75% of the 412 elementary school teachers responding to her survey did not have an oral language curriculum. Book and Pappas (1981) noted in their survey of over 3,000 secondary schools that only 32% required a basic speech communication course and that frequently those communication courses which were offered were not taught by an instructor with a degree in the discipline. At the college level, Gibson and others (1980) in their survey of the basic course found that approximately half of the responding institutions required a communication course for students graduating in education, arts and sciences, and business.

Another means of developing oral communication abilities which has received considerable attention in recent years is integrating communication skills in content area courses. As Rubin (1985) noted,

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> Content area classes can provide contexts in which communication skills are applied to more genuine tasks. In content area classes, the power of the spoken word as an instrument for discovering or creating knowledge is more readily exploited. Instruction in speaking and listening can, moreover, reduce the burdens of teaching a content area class. (p. 34)

"Communication Across the Curriculum" involves using oral communication activities in the study of a variety of different disciplines. Through a review of the literature, this paper will examine some of the various ways that oral communication has been taught in conjunction with other diciplines and will also identify several of the variables which affect this integration.

Oral Communication in Other Disciplines: Some Approaches

The review of the literature suggested that there are a number of ways that oral communication competencies receive attention outside the speech communication curriculum. Communication related activities are often found in specific courses and disciplines; they are encouraged through speaking labs and suggestion books for individual teachers; they are a part of a total curricular program.

Many of the books and articles which were reviewed dealt with how communication skills reeived attentiton in a specific course or discipline. One of the most common unions that was apparent was between the study of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Courses traditionally classified as "English" frequently have a "Speech" component. The advantages of studying these two disciplines simultaneously have been repeated by a number of sources. Golub (1986) explained,

> Oral communication activities, with their emphases on the same skills and competencies that are used in one's written communication, belong in the English classroom. This expanded perspective allows us to see ourselves not simply as teachers of writing but rather as teachers of language and communication, a much more appropriate and substantive role. (p. 16)

Sanders (1985) further noted that, "The strongest point in favor of oral work in the composition classroom is that it enables students to feel that they are taken seriously as people with minds, and this confidence can increase motivation to write well and even to tackle research papers with some sense of pleasure and accomplishment" (p. 358). Similar sentiments were voiced by others including Collins (1982), Wolsch and Wolsch (1982) and Schultz (1986).

While not all agree upon the relationship between the various communication arts (Halpern, 1984; Elbow, 1985), this relationship has become the basis for a number of combined programs. Cooper (1985) presented a model for such integration which focused upon communication contexts, functions and skills. She also suggested various activities and practices which would establish a supportive climate. One of the most widely discussed combined program is the thirty year old rhetoric program at the University of Iowa. This required course includes instruction and practice in both oral and written modes (Harper, 1981; Ochs, 1986; Trank, 1986). Similar programs have also been reported at a number of other

institutions including Duquesne University (Friday & Beranek, 1984), Michigan Technological University (Goldstein & Nelson, 1984), the U.S. Air Force Academy (Bangs, 1985) and Conneticut State College (Wenger & Fischbach, 1983).

A similar link of related communication abilities was also frequently discussed for courses in business communication. Clarke (1983) recommended a variety of oral communication activities which could be easily be integrated in the study of business communication. Nelson (1982) required that students consult with business faculty in choosing topics for oral and written assignments. Adamson (1982), in describing the study of functional communicaton at the University of Minnesota, noted that he combined writing, speaking and audio-visual proficiency by having students teach course topics.

Reports of integrating oral communication competencies in other discipline were also found on a limited basis in other content areas. Communication skills also received attention in areas such as vocational education (Mayer,1983; Oregon State Department of Education,1982), engineering (Selfe, 1983), nursing (Norris, 1986), in psychology (Klugh, 1983) and teacher education (Wagner, 1984; Smith, 1982).

Another approach to insuring that students were assisted in refining oral communication abilities while enrolled in content area courses was through establishing a speaking lab. When students are assigned an oral presentation in a content area course or communication course, they could find help in a speaking lab. Brownell and Watson (1984) reported that lab established at the University of Rhode Island was publicized to the entire school and helped in the retention effort. Students coming to the lab for assistance first completed diagnostic testing and received tutoring in areas such as public speaking, voice and diction, and communication apprehension. McKiernan (1984) noted that the speaking lab at the University of Iowa appealed to a broad spectrum of students with varying levels of ability.

Another way that speech communication abilities received attention in other disciplines seemed to arise from the desire of an individual faculty member to address such abilities. If individual instructors in various content areas were particularly interested in incorporating oral communication activities in their courses, a number of sources were available to assist them. Thaiss and Suhor (1984) described a number of classroom scenes which illustrated the integration of oral communication abilities into a variety of subject areas. The descriptions are then supported with corresponding research. Nugent (1986) presented articles on developing speaking skills in all subjects at all levels. The Wood (1977) booklets suggested activities for elementary and secondary students which would promote competency in the various communication functions. Cooper (1985) provided a number of specific assignments and activities which were designed to enhance communication abilities. At the college level, Rubin (1983) discussed how listening, discussion, speaking, relating could be introduced in the various disciplines. For instructors at all levels in most content areas, there are resources available which will aid in the integration of oral communication abilities.

Much of the literature on communication across the curriculum was devoted to the aforementioned approaches. Communication activities reported in specific courses or disciplines, speaking labs and individual instructor interest dominated as ways that oral communication abilities received attention outside the speech communication classroom. A handful

of resources, however, described special programs designed to insure that oral communication abilities were fully integrated across the entire curriculum.

At the elementary and secondary levels, several school districts defined integrated curriculums. For example, Beall (1981) documented the K-12 program in the Lincoln, Nebraska, public schools. Based upon the SCA competencies and language development research, objectives, activities and achievement indicators for all disciplines were defined for the use of media, public speaking, oral interpretation, groups discussion, problem solving and interpersonal communication. The Lynchburg, Viriginia, public schools devised a program that promotes cross curriculum speaking and listening through a series of thirty key experiences (Lynchburg Public Schools, 1986).

At the college level, another handful of programs have received attention. At St. Mary-of-the-Woods College in Indiana, a three stage program was funded by the Exxon Education Foundation (Dukes, 1986). This program included a speaking lab which featured various communication instructional resources along with video and audio recording equipment for practice sessions. The second phase was a series of faculty seminars which discussed topics ranging from communication theory, to listening, to conflict and to public speaking (Cooper, 1986). The final component of the program was the designation of speech emphasis courses from across the curriculum taught by faculty completing the seminars which incorporated advanced speaking assignments. While the interim evaluation of this project had not produced the expected improvement in speaking skills or reduction in communication apprehension, the sample size was insufficient to warrant any definite conclusions (Flint, 1986).

At Central College in Iowa, a program initially funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities focused on training the faculty from different disciplines in reading, listening, speaking and writing (Roberts, 1984). In the summers of 1979, 1980, and 1981, 2/3 of the college's faculty attended month long workshops which included two weeks devoted to speaking and listening. They then reworked their course syllabi to reflect more communication experiences. Over 200 hundred courses offered communication skills emphases, and 75% of the students reported an increase in their communication abilities with 92% expressing a desire to further improve their skills.

At Alverno College in Milwaukee, speaking, listening and interacting are competencies which students were expected to demonstrate prior to graduation (Loacker and others, 1984). To assist in the development of these abilities, students completed introductory courses which provide them with the basics which were further refined through labs and assignments in other disciplines. The faculty defined a developmental sequence for these various competencies and designated courses where the various levels of the sequences are demonstrated. Faculty were trained in assessing these competencies, and feedback was provided students on forms used by the entire college. Mentkowski and Doherty (1984) in reporting an evaluation of abilities across the curriculum noted that,

> Although alumane use abilities taught in the curriculum, they also use abilities to create a theory of action that gets tested in various work situations. This is in sharp contrast to the view that technical knowledge alone is the basis for effective performance. Alumnae do say they learn new technical skills, but they do not

> emphasize this knowledge when they describe how they go about deciding what to do. "My job is never the same ...I use communication analysis because you work very independently ...you have to analyze the financial statements from taxpayers and determine a course of action. (p. 13)

Clearly, there are a number of approaches to integrating the study of oral communication across the curriculum. Oral communication abilities received attention in specific courses and disciplines, in speaking labs, by individual instructors and in specially designed programs.

Variables Affecting Integration of Communication Across the Curriculum

From this overview of the approaches for integrating communication across the curriculum, it is possible to define a number of variables that speech commmunication educators must attend to as they consider their response to such integration at their institutions. These variables include faculty training, program quality, breadth of experience and developmental consideration.

Obviously, one of the major overriding considerations has to be the expertise of instructors from across the curriculum to teach oral communication skills. While it is naive to assume that all faculty are good communicators much less that they have the background to teach communication, this assumption permeates education. A widespread notion exists that anyone can teach oral communication. As Work (1982) noted in summarizing the study done by Rutherford (1979), "Although English teachers must spend 40 to 60% of their teaching time in developing the listening, composition, reading, and speech skills of their students, most college English programs allow only 8% of the professional couse time for teacher preparation in these skill areas."
Civikly (1986) commented upon a similar lack of training in higher education.

> In the college classroom the focus has not traditionally been on the instructor's efforts at getting the message across to the audience. Rather, successful impact (often equated with student learning) has been assumed to occur if the instructor is "content competent."....Much less thought has been paid to communication competence, the ability to speak, listen, behave, and interact in a way that is both appropriate for the setting and effective for the desired purpose. (p.6)

In many approaches for integrating communication across the curriculum, this lack of background does receive attention. Speaking labs were usually staffed by speech communication faculty or upper level undergraduate students. Several of the curriculum-wide programs also included a training component. Such training is less apparent when communication activities are combined into other disciplines or when communication activities are left to the design of an individual faculty member. Roberts (1984) concluded that, "It would appear necessary that all faculty undergo some sort of formal training in skills to sensitize them and aid them in this area. Informal peer training, such as would take place at coffee hours, is not sufficient" (p. 14). If oral communication competencies are to receive attention outside the speech communication

classroom, it is essential that faculty be trained to offer such instruction.

When faculty outside the discipline receive such training and communication activities are effectively integrated into other content areas, the next concern which logically follows is that these opportunities will draw students away from enrolling in courses in the speech communication discipline. While such a concern is valid, it does not seem to hold true in practice. Reports have indicated that experiences outside the speech classroom have promoted student awareness on the need to develop effective oral communication abilities. Madsen (1984) in describing an interdisciplinary major between business and mass communication entitled "Corporate Communication" noted that, "The fallout of the construction of the major was that the role of Speech Communication was strengthened in both programs, and thus the need for Speech Communication was strengthened" (p. 8). Roberts (1984) reported that as a result of the Central College program, the enrollments almost doubled in the upper level speech courses. Whether through design or happenstance, students will have a variety of communication experiences outside the communication classroom. If these outside experiences are good, it can be asset to the traditionally communication course enrollment. Speech educators have a vested interested in assuring the quality of communication across the curriculum.

A third concern which arises when considering communication study outside the communication classroom is the lack of balance in the communication skills which are attended to in such study. In many of the attempts to integrate communication across the curriculum, there was a heavy emphasis on public speaking and very little consideration given to other dimensions of communication discipline such as group interaction, interpersonal skills or media consumption. Hamilton (1986) contended,

> I have found before me in my classroom a generation of youngsters whose world encourages linguistic passivity. It falls to me as a language arts instructor not merely to hone pulic speaking skills, but even more challenging and difficult, to build awareness of the demands of clear verbal communication on the most rudimentary interpersonal levels. (p. 22)

Many of the curriculum-wide programs developed by elementary and secondary schools and by some colleges do address a variety of communication abilities, but many of the other approaches do not have such focus. Obviously in these instances, the limitations of the instruction need to be noted.

A fourth concern apparent from the review of outside approaches is the lack of attention to any sort of developmental sequence. As Butler (1986) illustrated, many times the communication experience is a one-shot event rather than a normal part of the school experience. These one-shot events not only arouse considerable anxiety but also ignore the fact that students must build on experiences to develop increasingly sophisiticated communication abilities. The experiences of the first grader should be different from the second grader, the nineth grader from the twelve, the college freshmen from the college senior. Unfortunately, many of the approaches discussed in the literature did not consider such developmental differences. Communication activities are suggested for integration into disciplines with little concern for what has proceeded or what will follow

a specific activity. Speech communication educators must be sensitive to this shortcoming.

In summary, the answers to four questions may help to ascertain the value of communication experiences outside the communication classroom. These questions are:

Do faculty outside the discipline have training in communication instruction and evaluation?

Is the quality of the experience sufficient to promote further interest in the study of communication?

Are communication activities drawn from the full spectrum of the communication discipline?

Are communication abilities approached in a developmental manner?

If these questions can be answered with "yes," the experiences associated with communicating across the curriculum may indeed help to promote the development of effective communication abilities. "No" responses suggest a re-evaluation of that approach.

Conclusion

When reference is made to "communication across the curricu[illegible]," it is evident that the reference is to a variety of approaches rather than to a single entity. It could be integration into a single discipline such as English or a single course such as business communication. It could mean the formation of a speaking lab to assist students in preparing communication related assignment. It could mean the interest of an individual faculty member with a desire to use communication activities, or it could mean a well-define curriculum-wide program. Whatever the approach, communication educators need to attend to several variables to assure that students are indeed receiving a worthwhile experience. Through attention to training, quality, breadth and sequencing, these approaches can help students begin to develop much needed communication abilities.

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